

in a Higher Being. Martin Luther King and Mrs. Parks both believed that the answer to hate and discrimination was love. Dr. King once wrote, "It is quite easy for me to think of a God of love, mainly because I grew up in a family where love was central and where lovely relationships were ever-present." Mrs. Parks was a devout member all her life of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and a woman who saw the face of God in every human being. These two leaders knew that freedom was not a grant of government but a gift from the Author of All Life.

So when they made their appeal to equal rights, they aimed straight for America's soul, and they roused the dozing conscience of a complacent nation. By calling us to be true to our founding promise of equality, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mrs. Parks helped African Americans gain their God-given rights.

As leaders, Martin Luther King and Mrs. Parks believed their calling was to be involved, to be active, to work for change. Long before Mrs. Parks refused to move from her bus seat, she'd been active in community efforts to advance opportunities for African Americans and to register them to vote.

At the dawn of this new century, America can be proud of the progress we have made toward equality, but we all must recognize we have more to do. The reason to honor Martin Luther King is to remember his strength of character and his leadership but also to remember the remaining work. The reason to honor Mrs. Parks is not only to pay homage to her strength of character but to remember the ideal of active citizenship. Active citizens in the 1960s struggled hard to convince Congress to pass civil rights legislation that ensured the rights of all, including the right to vote. And Congress must renew the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Martin Luther King did not live to celebrate his 40th birthday. Yet in the short time he walked upon this earth, he preached that all the powers of evil are ultimately no match for one individual armed with eternal truths. And one evening, on a bus ride home from work, a tired but brave woman named Rosa Parks proved that Dr. King was right.

And so today we honor Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks. We ask for God's bless-

ings on their legacy, and we ask for God's blessings on our great Nation.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:50 p.m. at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. In his remarks, he referred to President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia; John J. DeGioia, president, Georgetown University; civil rights leader Dorothy I. Height; and former Georgetown University head men's basketball coach, John Thompson, Jr., and his daughter Tiffany and son John Thompson III.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt of Belgium

January 17, 2006

President Bush. You're probably wondering what the Prime Minister is sharing with me. First of all, welcome. We're talking mountain biking—actually, he's talking about the Tour de France. He's a huge advocate and a follower of the bike scene around the world. He's also an avid mountain biker, and one of these days, he and I are going to ride. He's going to give me a lesson on how to ride a mountain bike.

First of all, welcome. Thanks for the wide-ranging discussion. I've been honored to know Guy for a long period of time. We have got a close relationship. And we talked about the importance of transatlantic relations, about how it's important for the United States to work with the European Union to reach common objectives and to help work together to make this world a more peaceful place and a better place for people.

We talked about bilateral relations, and the Prime Minister brought up an antiquated tax treaty that he believes needs to be looked at by our Government in order to facilitate trade between Belgium and the United States.

We talked about Africa, in particular, the Congo. And I want to thank you for your leadership, Mr. Prime Minister, on this very important issue. I told the Prime Minister my Government would work very closely with the Belgium Government to help the people of the Congo realize their full potential.

We had a wide-ranging discussion, as to be expected among friends, and it's been my honor to welcome him here. And I'm glad you're here.

Prime Minister Verhofstadt. Well, we had, in fact, a very good and intense discussion—not only about biking, that was only at the end, the biking, in the search of who can be the successor of Lance Armstrong. [Laughter] We have not made a final choice on who can be the successor.

But we had a very good, I think, discussion about transatlantic relationship. I'm very pleased that since our last meeting, we have started with this transatlantic informal meetings in New York and in Brussels. And it improves, I think, the relationship, the transatlantic relationship. There is certainly a lot of work still to do, and I think that common point of view and a common policy of the U.S. and of Europe on issues like the Middle East, like Iran, is certainly absolutely necessary and can improve this transatlantic relationship.

And we also discussed the need to have more reflection on future of North Atlantic Alliance, on the relationship between European defense and North Atlantic Alliance, and maybe we can develop a number of initiatives with Belgium in Brussels on that issues.

About the Congo, it's very clear that we have to help. The transition period is, at this moment, successful. We hope for elections in April, a second round in June. But we have already discussed what after these elections. The international community has to continue to help and to seek good governance in the Congo and in Central Africa.

So that were, in any way, the most important elements, and then at the end, in fact, we shall start a negotiation with the American administration to have a new tax treatment between Belgium and the U.S., to avoid double taxation in the future.

Thank you.

President Bush. Good job. Thanks, Guy. Appreciate you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:02 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. Prime Minister Verhofstadt referred to 2005 Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Statement on the Death of Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait

January 17, 2006

I was deeply saddened to learn of the death of His Highness Sheikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait. Sheikh Jabir was a friend and steadfast and reliable ally of the United States. He supported the U.S. servicemen and women who fought to liberate Kuwait and later Iraq from the aggression and tyranny of Saddam Hussein. Sheikh Jabir worked tirelessly to provide a better future for Kuwait's citizens and was the driving force behind many reforms, including the establishment of a vibrant, elected Parliament and a free press. In his last months, he provided critical leadership to ensure that Kuwait's women achieved political rights. On behalf of the American people, Laura and I send our deepest condolences to Sheikh Jabir's family and to the Government and people of Kuwait on the passing of this historic leader.

Letter to Congressional Leaders on Review of Title III of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996

January 17, 2006

Dear _____:

Consistent with section 306(c)(2) of the Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (LIBERTAD) Act of 1996 (Public Law 104–114)(the “Act”), I hereby determine and report to the Congress that suspension for 6 months beyond February 1, 2006, of the right to bring an action under title III of the Act is necessary to the national interests of the United States and will expedite a transition to democracy in Cuba.

Sincerely,

George W. Bush

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Richard G. Lugar, chairman, and Joseph R. Biden, Jr., ranking member, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations; Thad Cochran, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations; Henry J. Hyde, chairman, and Tom